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Letter dated 19 June 2002 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I wish to draw your attention to the latest incidents in the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terrorism directed against the citizens of Israel.

At approximately 8 a.m. (local time) yesterday morning, a Palestinian terrorist carrying a large suitcase filled with explosives boarded a crowded public bus in the Jerusalem neighbourhood of Gilo and blew himself up. The bomb, which was packed with nails and ball bearings to increase the pain and suffering of the victims, exploded as the bus passed near a local high school and at an hour when the bus was packed with high school students and commuters heading to work or school. The force of the explosion entirely destroyed the bus, ripping off its roof and sides and reducing it to a charred metal skeleton. At present, 19 Israelis are reported killed in the attack and 74 are wounded. Among the dead are two children, aged 11 and 15. The bombing is the single deadliest explosion in Jerusalem since a similar attack in 1996, when a Palestinian terrorist killed 26 Israelis aboard a public bus. The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for yesterday's attack.

Yesterday's bombing comes amidst warnings of attempts to commit large-scale acts of terrorism. On Monday, Israeli forces thwarted an attack when they stopped a suspicious individual near the village of Marja. As Israeli forces drew near to check the man, he blew himself up, killing himself but causing no injuries.

On Saturday evening two Israeli soldiers — Sgt. Yehezkel (Hezki) Gutman, age 22, and Sgt. Alexei Gladkov, age 20 — were killed and four others wounded when they were ambushed by Palestinian terrorists near the community of Dugit. The ambush occurred just a few hours after soldiers had thwarted a major terrorist attack in the same spot when they intercepted and then detonated a car rigged with more than 150 kilograms of explosives. Hours later, upon receiving reports of suspicious terrorist activity in the area, the soldiers returned and were ambushed by terrorists hiding in the brush. One terrorist was killed in the exchange; the rest fled in the direction of Palestinian-controlled territory. The terrorist organization Hamas also claimed responsibility for that attack.

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The Government of Israel holds the Palestinian Authority fully responsible for these latest acts of terrorism. The Palestinian Authority's policy of support for, and glorification of, acts of terrorism continues unabated, as does the involvement of its security forces in perpetrating, and helping others to perpetrate, violence against Israeli civilians.

Despite its claims in the Western media, the Palestinian Authority has failed to take even the most basic steps to prevent further terrorist attacks against Israelis, including arresting terrorists, confiscating weapons and munitions, and dismantling their organizational infrastructure. This is particularly true with regard to the terrorist organization Hamas, which continues to operate in the Gaza Strip with nearly complete freedom. The leaders of this group — which has been internationally recognized as a terrorist organization — have still not been arrested and are at present actively encouraging, organizing and carrying out acts of terror against Israelis. These efforts are encountering no resistance from the Palestinian leadership.

Until such time as the Palestinian leadership is genuinely prepared to renounce the use of violence and terrorism, and to accept the right of the State of Israel to exist in peace and security, peace in the Middle East will remain an elusive goal. There can be no substitute for the full and irrevocable commitment of the parties to resolve outstanding issues through peaceful means. As long as the Palestinian leadership fails to undertake such a commitment, in practice as well as in rhetoric, Israel will be left with no choice but to act in accordance with its right and duty to protect its citizens from the unremitting threat of Palestinian terrorism.

I submit this letter in follow-up to my numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as an official document of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 166, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yehuda **Lancry**
Permanent Representative